

Gender as Lived Time: Reading *The Second Sex* for a Feminist Phenomenology of Temporality

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*This article suggests that Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* offers an important contribution to a feminist phenomenology of temporality. In contrast to readings of *The Second Sex* that focus on the notion of "becoming" as the main claim about the relation between "woman" and time, this article suggests that Beauvoir's discussion of temporality in volume II of *The Second Sex* shows that Beauvoir understands the temporality of waiting, or a passive present, to be an underlying structure of women's existence and subordination. Accordingly, I argue that Beauvoir does not see "woman" as a mere becoming, as that which unfolds in time, but instead understands becoming a woman to be realized as lived time. As such, Beauvoir's account shows that gender and temporality are deeply entangled, and thus she challenges the classic phenomenological account of temporality as a general, given structure of human existence. More specifically, I argue that her account shows how a particular experience of time is an underlying structure of sexual objectification, a claim that expands on the feminist phenomenological claim that a particular relation to space becomes a way in which women take up and negotiate their own subordination and objectification.*

In this essay, I show that Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* offers a feminist phenomenology of temporality. I argue that by paying attention to temporality as a central theme in Beauvoir's descriptive account of becoming a woman, we see that gender and temporality are co-constitutive phenomena.¹ I contend that this expands on the dominant reading of temporality in *The Second Sex*, which locates the temporality of gender in Beauvoir's famous sentence, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 1949, 13; my translation).² Judith Butler's account of Beauvoir's sentence is a notable example of such a reading. For Butler, Beauvoir's sentence is significant because of the temporal claim it makes about gender as a process of acquisition. In "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," Butler makes this clear:

Gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realizing possibilities, *a process* of interpreting the body, giving it cultural form. In other words, to be a woman is to become a woman; it is not a matter of acquiescing to a fixed ontological status, in which case one could be born a woman, but, rather, *an active process* of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities. (Butler 1986, 36; emphasis mine)

Thus, as Butler reads Beauvoir, that one becomes a woman means that gender is acquired in time insofar as it is constructed over time.

However, Sara Heinämaa argues that Butler misinterprets Beauvoir's notion of becoming by reading the born/becoming distinction as the sex/gender distinction (Heinämaa 1997). Heinämaa argues that the sex/gender distinction is not present in Beauvoir's work such that becoming cannot and does not indicate, as Butler thinks, a temporal process of social acquisition. Rather, Heinämaa suggests that "becoming" "is not a collection of actions, but a way of acting" (Heinämaa 1996, 301). As such, becoming a woman is a particular mode of assuming a world. From this view, "becoming" gestures to the phenomenological understanding of human existence as not static or given, but as an open, ongoing process (Heinämaa 2003, 84). "Woman" is not an accumulation of actions, but a mode of being that is realized in and through time.

Near the end of her description of women's situation, however, Beauvoir offers us another significant claim about the relationship between "woman" and temporality. She writes, "the woman protests against this long wait that is her own life. In one sense, *her whole existence is a waiting*" (Beauvoir 2010, 649; emphasis mine). Although it is undeniable that the temporal concept of "becoming" introduces and is formative to Beauvoir's descriptive account of womanhood, what should we make of this other claim about the temporality of "woman"? Is there another way to consider how Beauvoir understands the relation between temporality and "woman" and thus temporality and gendered subjectivity more generally by paying attention to her claim that to become a woman is to become a waiting? After all, as Bonnie Mann points out, Beauvoir continually "returns to the theme of temporality in her descriptions of women's situation" (Mann 2014, 36).³ How might attention to Beauvoir's recurring address of temporality open up a reading of *The Second Sex* as a feminist phenomenology of temporality?

Here, I address these questions by tracing the discussion of temporality in volume II of *The Second Sex*. I show that Beauvoir understands the temporality of waiting, or what I call a passive present, to be an underlying structure of women's existence and subordination. That is, Beauvoir does not see "woman" as a mere becoming, as that which unfolds *in time*, but instead understands becoming a woman to be realized as *lived time*. I argue that this discloses that how one lives time is constitutive of the kind of gendered person one becomes. Although Beauvoir's descriptive account of women's existence comes from a white and European perspective (Spelman 1985; Simons 1999), I argue that the significance of her conception of "woman" as lived

time is twofold. First, more generally, it shows that gender and temporality are deeply entangled and thus challenges the classical phenomenological account of temporality as a general, given structure of human existence. Second, more specifically, it shows how a particular experience of time is an underlying structure of sexual objectification, a claim that expands on the feminist phenomenological claim that a particular relation to space becomes a way in which women take up and negotiate their own subordination and objectification (Young 1980; Cahill 2001).

In what follows, I first draw attention to the readings of Beauvoir's notion of becoming given by Butler and Heinämaa (Butler 1986; 1988; 1990; Heinämaa 1996; 1997; 2003). I underscore their respective interpretations of becoming as a temporal process, which accounts for gender as *in time*. I suggest that even as Heinämaa's critique of Butler opens up a phenomenological interpretation of the temporal notion of becoming, it does not yet engage *The Second Sex* as a phenomenology of temporality. Accordingly, in the second section, I provide an alternative reading of temporality in *The Second Sex*, arguing that, for Beauvoir, a woman embodies and therefore is a passive present. I argue that this underscores that gender and temporality are co-constituted. In the final section, I argue that the account of a woman as a passive present shows how temporality conditions a woman's bodily existence as confined and enclosed.

Although there is significant scholarly recognition of Beauvoir's reflections on temporality, she is seldom read as a contributor to the history of the phenomenology of temporality. Many scholars suggest that when Beauvoir discusses temporality in her works, she adopts and/or appropriates canonical figures and frameworks in the history of Western philosophy. More specifically, it has been said that Beauvoir adopts a Marxist-Hegelian account of temporality (Lundgren-Gothlin 1996; Veltman 2006), works from Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's respective accounts of temporality (Arp 2001; Tidd 2001; Holveck 2005), uses Nietzsche's description of temporality (Miller 2012), adopts or challenges a Sartrean conception of transcendence (Lloyd 1984; Le Doeuff 1987; Kruks 1995; 1998; Arp 2001; Bauer 2001; Busch 2005; Moi 2008), or follows Heidegger's account in *Being and Time* (Tidd 1999; 2001; Heinämaa 2003). Recently, in spite of calling Beauvoir one of "the influential feminist thinkers who combine phenomenology with feminist *theoretical reflections on time*," the contributions in the important anthology, *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, do not consider Beauvoir as part of the classical or feminist phenomenological considerations of temporality (Schües 2011, 1; Schües, Olkowski, and Fielding 2011).⁴ In contrast to these views, my reading of temporality in *The Second Sex* situates Beauvoir within the history of the phenomenology of temporality and highlights her distinctly feminist approach.

"BECOMING" AS THE TEMPORALITY OF GENDER

Beauvoir's notion of becoming notably influences Butler's performative theory of gender. Although, as Heinämaa points out, Butler's readings of Beauvoir's conception of the body are inconsistent (Heinämaa 1997), Butler's readings of "becoming" as the temporality of gender are, I think, quite consistent.⁵ In drawing attention to this

consistency, we see not only how Beauvoir's notion of "becoming" is formative to Butler's own temporal conception of gender, but also how Heinämaa's critique of Butler opens up, but does not fully account for, Beauvoir's phenomenology of temporality in *The Second Sex*.

Prior to *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that Beauvoir's famous sentence, and more specifically the notion of becoming contained in it, "distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired" (Butler 1986, 35). For Butler, this offers an important account of gender as "both choice and acculturation" (37). Insofar as gender is acquired and thoroughly cultural, it undermines any causal relation between sex and gender and instead suggests for Butler that gender is a temporal phenomenon. Hence, we see that gender "is not temporally discrete because gender is not originated at some point in time after which it is fixed in form" (39). It "is not traceable to a definable origin precisely because it is itself an originating activity incessantly taking place" (39).

Butler thus argues that Beauvoir's notion of "becoming" discloses not only the temporal movement of gender as a continuous way of taking up and responding to cultural norms, but also, more generally, that gendered subjectivity is temporal through and through. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Butler claims Beauvoir's notion of "becoming a woman" means that gender "is an identity tenuously constituted in time," moving "the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of a constituted *social temporality*" (Butler 1988, 519, 520). As Butler reads Beauvoir, that one becomes a woman is to say that gender is constructed *in time*. This reading of Beauvoir becomes Butler's own temporal conception of gender in *Gender Trouble*.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler is critical of Beauvoir, claiming that she adopts the Cartesian mind/body dualism and thus takes the sexed body to be a natural fact that is "indifferent to signification" (Butler 1990, 176). Nevertheless, Butler praises the notion of becoming. "If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman," Butler writes, "it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end" (45). From this reading of Beauvoir's notion of becoming, Butler advances her own conception of gender as repetition, a temporal process of continual renewal amid a social world. Butler writes:

It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (45)

As a derivative of Beauvoir's notion of becoming, then, Butler claims the gendered subject is produced through "a *stylized repetition of acts*" or through the "reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (191). This view leads Butler to argue for "a conception of gender as a constituted *social temporality*," a conception Butler previously ascribed to Beauvoir (191).

However, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler differentiates her temporal conception of gender from Beauvoir, arguing that the sexed body is also constituted through the repetition of “words, acts, gestures, and desire” (185). For Butler, then, the sexed body is the effect of gender, both of which are constructed through repetition. As Cinzia Arruzza points out, this formulation makes time central to the consolidation of a gendered subject:

Gender is therefore both the sedimentation of a series of norms, which present themselves in a reified form as corporeal styles, as the “natural configuration of bodies,” and the practices that enact these styles and therefore produce gendered subjects. Time is, in both cases, a crucial factor. In the first case, the sedimentation of norms and the corporeal styles are produced over time. In the second case, enacting these styles means repeating over time the acts that perform gender and create the gendered subject. (Arruzza 2015, 34)

Or, to put it another way, repetition is the constructive or performative dimension of gender that guarantees and destabilizes the gendered subject. This leads Butler to claim, “gender is an identity tenuously constituted *in time*” (Butler 1990, 191; emphasis mine).⁶

However, Heinämaa argues that Butler misreads Beauvoir’s phenomenological account of “woman” and thus the notion of becoming by importing the sex/gender distinction into Beauvoir’s famous sentence. According to Heinämaa, Butler consistently presents Beauvoir’s work “as a theory about the socio-cultural production of gender (feminine, woman), presupposing a factual basis in nature and outside all signification (female)” (Heinämaa 1997, 29). Although Butler draws attention to the phenomenological underpinnings of *The Second Sex*, Heinämaa argues that Butler nevertheless interprets Beauvoir’s famous sentence through the sex/gender distinction, which turns Beauvoir’s phenomenological project into a constructivist theory about gender. The sex/gender distinction thus becomes the theoretical framework from which Butler interprets the notion of becoming. In doing so, Heinämaa argues, Butler overlooks the phenomenological *aim* of *The Second Sex* and instead turns it into a theory of gender acquisition. To understand the notion of becoming in this way is, Heinämaa claims, to misread Beauvoir.

In contrast, Heinämaa aims to situate Beauvoir’s account of becoming a woman in relation to the phenomenological notion of the living body as it is articulated in the works of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. More specifically, Heinämaa argues that Beauvoir starts from the notion of the living body—the way the body is experienced as it exists in the world with other bodies—in order to describe the meaning of “woman” and “femininity” as a lived corporeal style (Heinämaa 1997, 27). From this view, Beauvoir aims to think through how “woman” as a body-subject realizes herself as she is intertwined with the world. Consequently, “becoming” raises the question of possibility: how is it possible that one becomes a woman? To answer this question from the conceptual apparatus of sex/gender is, Heinämaa argues, to introduce theoretical abstractions into a phenomenological

description. Thus, when Beauvoir claims that one becomes a woman, she is not making a claim about gender; rather, she is asking about how “woman,” as a mode of being, is realized.

More specifically, Heinämaa argues that Beauvoir understands womanhood much like Merleau-Ponty understands sexuality: “as a kind of intentionality that structures all activities in the same way as an atmosphere or mood shades the world” (Heinämaa 1996, 301). Such a phenomenological reading, Heinämaa claims, shows that “becoming” is not an achievement that produces a particular kind of body, but refers to a particular way of assuming one’s embodied existence. That one becomes a woman does not mean “woman” is an effect of repetitive acts, but in contrast, becoming gestures to the way womanhood, its values and meanings, is “a structure of . . . being, not a specific object, attribute, or a collection” of acts (302). This reading pushes back against Butler’s constructivist reading of the body, suggesting that to become a woman is not to acquire a gendered body, but rather it is to suggest that “woman” is taken up in and through the living body.

However, Heinämaa also accounts for “woman” as realized and altered in repetition and as sedimentation of earlier intentional acts, suggesting that former embodied actions open up and provoke future actions (Heinämaa 1996; 1997; 1999; 2003). Yet, in contrast to Butler, Heinämaa argues that repetition and sedimentation refer to a temporal unfolding of the living body. In this sense, becoming a woman is still a temporal process, but a woman is not produced, she realizes herself through the accumulation of a past that is repeated and modified in order to actualize a distinct way of going toward the world. Ursula Tidd echoes Heinämaa, suggesting that Beauvoir understood “becoming a woman” following Merleau-Ponty’s account of the temporal sedimentation of style:

Merleau-Ponty’s notions about the habitual body and the present body find points of productive convergence with Beauvoir’s views on temporality and bodily identity. . . . This is evidently germane to Beauvoir’s argument in *Le Deuxième Sexe* that women’s gendered bodily identity can be viewed as a corporeal style, which is learned and sedimented *over a period of time*. (Tidd 2001, 116; emphasis mine)

Consequently, similar to Butler, Heinämaa’s phenomenological reading, corroborated by Tidd, argues that “woman” is realized *in time*. It thus seems that the key difference between Butler’s reading of “becoming a woman” and Heinämaa’s reading is the difference of the relation between corporeality and “woman.” Whereas for Butler the notion of becoming gestures to a conception of gendered corporeality as an effect of repetition, Heinämaa argues that becoming is an invitation to think about how woman, as style, sediments in the living body.⁷ In spite of this difference, however, Heinämaa and Butler read “becoming” as the temporal claim of *The Second Sex*.

However, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty argues that subjectivity is deeply temporal not because it is mere repetition; it is not just an effect of habit, but because subjectivity is temporality. “Subjectivity,” he writes, “is not in time because it *takes up or lives time*” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 446; emphasis mine). If we take

Heinämaa's phenomenological reading of Beauvoir seriously, as I want to here, then it seems that we must consider whether an understanding of "woman" as *in time* is how Beauvoir conceives of the relation between temporality and "woman." Might we want to think about how a woman lives time? I am not suggesting that we should dismiss the importance of the notion of becoming to Beauvoir's phenomenological account of womanhood, but instead, I am suggesting that there is, from a phenomenological perspective, more to consider about Beauvoir's discussion of temporality in *The Second Sex*. Insofar as phenomenology accounts for the lived experience of time, we must ask: how is "woman" a particular lived experience of time? How is "woman," as a body-subject, realized as temporality? I consider these questions in the next section.

A FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY OF TEMPORALITY IN *THE SECOND SEX*

Beauvoir's discussion of temporality revolves around the notions of immanence and transcendence and the classical phenomenological account of the triadic temporal structure of experience. Beauvoir introduces the concepts of immanence and transcendence in *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* as a way to underscore the ambiguity of the human condition as facticity and freedom. As such, immanence and transcendence refer to a general structure of human existence.⁸ In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir understands immanence and transcendence to structure human temporality, but suggests that this general structure is bifurcated by sexual difference such that men and women are denied unmediated access to the whole structure of human temporality. This means that although Beauvoir underscores that women and men live both immanence and transcendence, she ultimately argues that there is a significant difference in *how* they live these temporalities. Thus, consistent with classical phenomenology, Beauvoir understands temporality to constitute the horizon of subjective experience and to structure one's being-in-the-world, but she breaks with the tradition by claiming that temporality is entangled with the particularity of becoming a woman.

More specifically, Beauvoir argues that a woman's subjectivity is characterized by the temporality of immanence through ruptures in the triadic structure of time, which institute a cyclical embodiment of the present that is constitutive of a woman as a particular kind of gendered being. This embodied present leaves Beauvoir to lament, a woman's "whole existence is a waiting since she is enclosed in the limbo of immanence and contingency" (Beauvoir 2010, 649). For Beauvoir, waiting is a temporal hiatus between the past and future, which means that waiting is a distinct experience of the present as passive—it neither reaches back to the past nor toward a future.

In order to understand how a woman comes to embody time in this distinct way, it is first necessary to consider why, for Beauvoir, "becoming a woman is breaking with the past, without recourse" (Beauvoir 2010, 391). Beauvoir accounts for three distinct breaks or ruptures with the past, which coincide with three existentially

significant developmental events: girlhood, heterosexual initiation, and marriage. These ruptures in time annex a woman into the universe of men, to the world that is *for men*, such that she comes to exist as their plaything. The ruptures are thus heterosexist in character insofar as they come to create and solidify a woman's situation as a relative existence.⁹

Beginning with her account of girlhood, Beauvoir suggests that a girl lives "detached from her childhood past" where "the present is for her only a transition. . . . In a more or less disguised way, her youth is consumed by waiting. She is waiting for Man" (Beauvoir 2010, 341). This detachment from the past throws a girl into an anticipatory temporality of waiting, which begins her immersion into the world of men and a conversion of her existence as for men.¹⁰ In contrast to childhood where the girl's temporal horizon, like that of a boy, is an open structure that seamlessly integrates the past and present toward a future, the temporality of waiting is a temporal suspension achieved by a break with the past. No longer a mere child, the girl is suspended in the time between her past structured by transcendence and a future structured by immanence. This temporal shift marks an important conflict "between her originary claim to be subject, activity, and freedom, on the one hand and, on the other, her erotic tendencies and the social pressure to assume her self as a passive object" (348). Thus, in girlhood, waiting is the temporal conversion that underlies sexual objectification and severs the girl's claim to freedom.

This conflict is resolved through "a new occurrence that creates a rupture with the past": heterosexual initiation (Beauvoir 2010, 383). Unlike the girl whose freedom is tenuous, the first experience of heterosexual sex is a temporal conversion of the girl's experience of herself as a tenuous subject to an object. Whereas girlhood left her waiting for her future as a man's object, heterosexual sex inaugurates "a hiatus between yesterday and tomorrow" wherein the temporality of waiting becomes the temporality of the present (391). In this sense, the present is a temporal isolation insofar as it is not a present that is bound to the past or future but is, instead, an interruption in the triadic structure of time. Consequently, she is hurled into the present as sexual prey. The temporal hiatus anchors a girl to the present, which is the experience of time that comes to characterize the temporal horizon of a woman.

For Beauvoir, marriage is the developmental and existential event that reifies the temporal structure of womanhood as a passive present. It is this reification that rounds out the conversion of lived time as an open structure to a closed one. For Beauvoir, the married woman "breaks with the past more or less brutally" because "she is annexed to her husband's universe" (Beauvoir 2010, 442). The difference between this rupture and the ones prior to it is that now a woman exists in a very concrete way for a particular man. This realization of her relative existence guarantees and deepens a woman's suspension in the present as a temporal limbo. When she becomes a part of her husband's universe, she becomes a stranger to her past and her future and is incorporated into his time. This leaves a woman exiled in a present that refers only to itself. Indeed, as Beauvoir says, a married woman is "lost in the middle of a world to which no aim calls her, *abandoned in an icy present*" (487; my emphasis). Without recourse to her past and without unmediated access to the future,

a woman is trapped in and thus assumes a passive present. She is frozen in time. This particular experience of an entrapment in the present is, for Beauvoir, how a woman's existence is a waiting. Steeped in the present, a woman embodies a temporal state of repose or passivity. As in girlhood, a woman waits for the temporal justification of her existence. That is, a woman lives the future and the past vicariously through her husband because he "posits ends and projects paths to them... he spills over the present and opens up the future" (73).¹¹ Consequently, although the temporal ruptures are significant to becoming a woman insofar as they institute the passive present, the temporality of "woman" is, for Beauvoir, the closed, rigid experience of an icy present.¹²

Importantly, the confinement to the present is one of the ways in which Beauvoir understands a woman to be relegated to immanence inasmuch as the "present is eternal, useless, and hopeless" (Beauvoir 2010, 475). A woman's relation to time is redundant. Living "every day... like the previous one" time "seems to be going around in circles without going anywhere" (475, 644). As Penelope Deutscher argues, this repetition "impoverishes a woman's relation to time" insofar as a woman habituates herself to an eternal present (Deutscher 2008, 97). In making the redundancy of time habitual, in living the present over and over again, a woman loses an autonomous claim to transcendence, a relationship to freedom where the past and present tend toward one's own future.¹³

Thus, to become woman is to take up time, through relentless imposition and existential burden, in a particular way. This conception of the temporalization of subjectivity resonates with Merleau-Ponty's understanding of subjectivity as temporality (Merleau-Ponty 2012). In contrast to locating subjectivity *in time* or reducing the subject to time, Merleau-Ponty claims that a subject actualizes through the lived experience of time. Beauvoir, however, further delineates this point by showing that subjectivity is generated through the *specific and concrete* way time is assumed. A woman's redundant experience of the present becomes her. She is the present. Consequently, how one lives time is constitutive of the kind of gendered person one becomes. This emphasis on the relation between the actualization of subjectivity and lived time adds temporal depth to Heinämaa's phenomenological reading of becoming as repetition and sedimentation. In other words, on my reading, becoming a woman is not just a style realized in time, but is the realization of a certain temporal style. Thus, if Beauvoir were to answer Heidegger's question about time—how does time show itself?—her answer would be that it appears as and through gendered subjectivity (Heidegger 2006).

Although Beauvoir's account of the temporal style of a woman as a passive present attends to only one temporality of "woman" and is thus not an account of every woman's lived experience of time, Beauvoir's insight is that a closed, rigid temporality is constitutive of living a relative existence as a woman. We learn in detail that a woman is constituted as a relative being through her embodiment of and confinement to the present, which, more generally, suggests that gender is taken up as an existential project through temporality. Certainly, some women are burdened by such an existence more than others, some women resist such an existence, and some

women take up such an existence, but what is key for Beauvoir is that temporality is a central way the existential, political, and material differences between women and men are lived. From this view, we understand that gendered subjectivity and gender oppression are not merely phenomena in time, but temporalize as lived experiences of time.

Moreover, insofar as gendered subjectivity actualizes and is lived through temporality, Beauvoir's account also suggests that temporality is gendered. She shows how gender intervenes with the general human temporality of immanence and transcendence. It is not that a woman *is* immanence as a man *is* transcendence, but rather that the general structure of human temporality is entangled with the social and historical mediation and valuation of living bodies.

Consequently, the discussion of temporality in *The Second Sex* shows that temporality is gendered and is part of the way gender is constituted. This specifically contests the traditional phenomenological emphasis on a general structure of human temporality by taking seriously the way in which the particularity of the historical and social phenomenon of gender mediates the generality of lived time. As Beauvoir sees it, temporality does not precede gender. Insofar as subjectivity is realized through gender, she claims that how we live time is entangled with the reality of becoming a gendered being. For Beauvoir, a dynamic experience of time, an experience in which the future is opened up by the past and present, is not lived by women because their material conditions do not grant it. In contrast to classical phenomenology, Beauvoir argues that a triadic temporal horizon is not a given feature of human existence, but is, instead, conferred by the material conditions in which one lives.¹⁴ Moreover, since temporality constitutes gendered subjectivity, gender becomes integral to the disclosure of time.

Ultimately, then, Beauvoir's phenomenology of temporality not only makes it problematic to posit a genderless, primordial structure of lived time, but also demands an understanding of gender as bound to the experience of time. Further consideration of the way time is lived by and deployed in gendered lives can help expand and elaborate on the specific ways in which temporality operates as an underlying structure of gender. However, the general insight Beauvoir's phenomenology of temporality provides about the relation between gender and temporality, that is, gender *as lived time*, provides a strong point of departure for such work.

THE HARM OF TEMPORALITY: OBJECTIFICATION AND OPPRESSION

So far, I have suggested that, following Beauvoir's account in *The Second Sex*, it is necessary to think about gender as lived time and, in particular, to understand "becoming a woman" to be the realization of an embodied relation to a passive present. In this last section, I consider the existential consequences of such gendered temporality in light of contemporary feminist phenomenological considerations of women's bodily comportment and sexual violence. I do so to underscore that a critical dimension of Beauvoir's feminist phenomenology of temporality is that it begins

to think through temporality as an underlying structure of the sexual objectification of women, a point that anticipates and adds to contemporary feminist phenomenological insights.

On Beauvoir's account, the ruptures with the past and the lived experience of the present are noteworthy because of their harm and violence. She accounts for this in numerous ways as she describes the developmental and temporal conversions lived by a woman. She recounts the girl's erotic activities and sexual initiation as vicious (Beauvoir 2010, 383), discusses the young girl as wounded, shamed, and torn from her childhood (340, 391), and understands the married woman to be brutalized by marriage (442). That these temporal shifts are understood to be violent suggests that they threaten and destroy one's existence. But more than this, Beauvoir argues that to be enveloped in and thus to assume the present is to be mired in what is here and now in such a way that diminishes a woman's capacity to build her own world, an activity that relies on an open structure of temporality. As such, the passive present is an existential confinement and closure of the world that keeps a woman in her place.

In "Throwing Like a Girl," Iris Marion Young argues that, in Western patriarchal societies, there is a "particular style of bodily comportment that is typical of feminine existence," which entails a relation to space through which women are "inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified" (in Young 2005, 42). Following Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, Young argues that a woman is positioned in space rather than as a subject who is "spatially constituted and a constituting spatial subject" (41). From this view, spatiality, or how a woman inhabits, moves, and takes up space, is a central structure of a particular mode of being situated and perceived as a woman and of assuming one's self as a gendered body-subject. Accordingly, girls and women come to live the very space of their bodies as similarly positioned in and confined to space. This experience of the space of the body amounts to a particular embodied experience in which women and girls live their bodies as violable, as things that can be positioned, as objects that can be put to use by and gazed at by others.

Elaborating on Young's argument, Ann Cahill draws attention to the way in which this rootedness in place is produced by the pervasive threat of rape lived by girls and women in a rape culture. For Cahill, what binds women to an inhibited and confined experience of space is the experience of one's bodily subjectivity as routinely under surveillance because of its sexual violability. A woman's limited experience of space is an effort to guard against "harm inflicted by other bodies," since "[t]o go beyond that space is to enter an arena where her body is in danger of being violated" (Cahill 2001, 158). Cahill thus underscores how rape culture produces and sustains a woman's relation to her body-space as restricted and violable. Or, as Cahill puts it, "[i]n acquiring the bodily habits that render the subject 'feminine,' habits that are inculcated at a young age and then constantly redefined and maintained, the woman learns to accept her body as dangerous, willful, fragile, and hostile" (161).

But on my reading of Beauvoir, how a woman lives time is also constitutive of objectification and oppression, and comes to be a way a woman lives her existence as *for* others. When a woman becomes a waiting, when she is abandoned in an icy

present, she lives a profound existential dependency. In being reduced to and confined to a passive present, a woman is *in* or *positioned by* time rather than as a subject who simultaneously constitutes and is constituted by time. When read in relation to Butler's conception of gender as in time or Heinämaa's account of woman as a style realized over and in time, accounting for the ways a woman is positioned in time through her relation to men, as Beauvoir does, underscores that being anchored "in time" is the temporal dimension of objectification and subordination. As a waiting, as steeped in the present, a woman lives her self as a body-subject as temporally confined.

Consequently, akin to Young's claim that, in a sexist society, women learn to live out their existence through a particular relation to space, a relation that is disclosed in bodily comportment and that binds women to immanence, Beauvoir's account of temporality shows that a woman's lived relation to time also conditions a woman's bodily existence in the world as *thing-like*. As Beauvoir shows, in breaking with the past and assuming a never-ending, passive present, the temporality of a woman is that which constrains, confines, and encloses her in the world. This temporal entrapment prevents a woman from realizing her own world. When a woman is abandoned to the present, she is steeped in immanence, and thus temporality, too, roots a woman's bodily existence "in place" (Young 2005, 41). Beauvoir thus helps us understand how temporality is not only lived by women as a deep existential injury, but also how feminine bodily comportment is bolstered by a particular temporality. That is, when women are confined in space, when they come to live their bodies as gazed upon, as fragile, as dangerous, they are also living a temporal paralysis.

In "Creepers, Flirts, Heroes, and Allies: Four Theses on Men and Sexual Harassment," Bonnie Mann addresses the significant role of such temporal paralysis in sexual harassment (Mann 2012). More specifically, Mann argues that the first significant harm of ordinary sexual objectification, or what she calls "creepiness," is a sexualized theft of time. For Mann, the temporal theft relies on the creeper's entitled intentionality—he is "already in the mode of 'I-regard-you-as-fuckable'" when he encounters a woman—but the *temporal harm* of his entitlement is that a woman's agency is consumed by the creeper's "dominant intentional mood" (Mann 2012, 26, 30). His mood compels "her subjective capacities to be-in-relation to him in a field whose possibilities he affectively controls" (26). The woman's ability to negotiate the encounter on her terms is, then, preempted by binding or positioning a woman in the creeper's temporal field. In doing so, the woman does not become a mere object for the creeper, but rather a woman, as a body-subject, is put to use for the creeper by being deprived of an open temporal field. In relation to Beauvoir's account, we can say that the creeper turns a woman into a passive present because she is constituted by the creeper's time; reducing a woman to a passive present, as the creeper does, allows a woman to be put to use.

In this sense, Beauvoir's specific account of woman as a passive present discloses how temporality tacitly conspires to generate and structure women's sexual objectification. The key insight, then, of the particular account of the relation between "woman" and temporality in *The Second Sex* is that a restricted temporality, namely a

passive present, deeply structures and actualizes the experience of sexual objectification and hence gender subordination. This point contributes to and expands on the long-standing and important feminist phenomenological concern with spatiality as an underlying structure of feminine existence and sexual objectification. Moreover, this insight, along with her general point about the co-constitutive relation between gender and temporality, underscores the need to think about the ways temporality shapes and burdens the existence of women in particular and gendered subjectivity more generally.

Thus, when we pay attention to how the theme of temporality is central to Beauvoir's claim that one becomes a woman and to her description of this becoming, we can read *The Second Sex* as a feminist phenomenology of temporality.

NOTES

1. I acknowledge that Beauvoir's phenomenological project in *The Second Sex* is not to account for gender, but to account for "becoming a woman," and I take it to be important to read Beauvoir's project as a description of "woman" (*la femme*). Nevertheless, I understand "becoming a woman" to be, in contemporary terms, the becoming of a gendered subjectivity, and so I use "gender" in this paper not to equate Beauvoir's *la femme* with "gender," but to talk about "becoming a woman" as one kind of gendered subjectivity. Jennifer McWeeny's reading of Beauvoir offers an alternative way to understand "becoming a woman" (McWeeny 2017).

2. In the rest of this article, I rely with one exception on the 2010 English translation of *The Second Sex* by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovaney-Chevallier (Beauvoir 2010). I do not follow their translation of Beauvoir's famous sentence. In my view, however, this disagreement does not denigrate the depth and strength of their translation as a whole.

3. Bonnie Mann's readings of Beauvoir often highlight the pervasive theme of temporality (Mann 2008; 2014) and are a key source of my motivation to read *The Second Sex* as a feminist phenomenology of temporality.

4. This omission is evident when Christina Schües writes, "the issue of time has been neglected. Given that feminist phenomenology has, since the 1990s, engaged in rereading the classics in a most fruitful and productive way, it is even more remarkable that feminist phenomenology has never really considered, or reconsidered, questions of time and temporality" (Schües 2011, 2).

5. Heinämaa claims that Butler's readings of Beauvoir pre and post *Gender Trouble* are more positive insofar as they do not accuse Beauvoir of Cartesianism (Heinämaa 1997). To make this claim, Heinämaa refers to Butler's essay, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," as the post-*Gender Trouble* text that returns to a positive reading of Beauvoir. However, this essay (1988) was actually published prior to *Gender Trouble* (1990). This does not disprove Heinämaa's point that Butler changes her reading of Beauvoir, but it does suggest that Butler's positive readings of Beauvoir occur *before* the publication of *Gender Trouble*.

6. Butler also locates the category of sex in time when she asks about its history: "Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history, or histories? Is there a

history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction?" (Butler 1990, 9). But, as Arruzza argues, it seems right to understand Butler's primary task as an account of the temporalization of gender and sex, not its historicization (Arruzza 2015, 42).

7. Of course, this entails another difference between these two readings, namely whether "gender" and "woman" are equivalent terms.

8. Among Beauvoir scholars, there is little agreement on how to understand immanence and transcendence. The most dominant understandings of immanence and transcendence suggest that they ought to be read as either existentialist notions or as Marxist-Hegelian ones, but not first and foremost as temporal categories (Lloyd 1984; Le Doeuff 1987; Kruks 1995; Lundgren-Gothlin 1996; Kruks 1998; Arp 2001; Veltman 2006; Deutscher 2008; Moi 2008). Deutscher's work is an exception (Deutscher 2008). Following Marx, Deutscher claims, Beauvoir associates repetition with the immanent domain insofar as it is labor that perpetuates life, whereas transcendence is a creative, future-oriented temporality that materializes human existence as more than mere animality. I am sympathetic to Deutscher's reading insofar as it underscores immanence and transcendence as modes of temporality. Nevertheless, I think a phenomenological account of immanence and transcendence provides a more robust and embodied account of the relation between temporality and gendered subjectivity. And although Deutscher mentions that Beauvoir's account of repetition is a result of drawing "on a crowd of interpretive and philosophical models," the majority of Deutscher's account of repetition in *The Second Sex* claims that Beauvoir echoes and expands on Marx (Deutscher 2008, 108).

9. Although Beauvoir certainly does not tell the story of all women, her descriptive account does acknowledge, at some moments, that not all women assume or comfortably take up this relative existence. For instance, Beauvoir often talks about women's efforts to resist and renounce the myth of the eternal feminine.

10. This anticipatory temporality is strikingly different from the anticipatory temporality that drives *Dasein* into existence. For Martin Heidegger, anticipation is what propels human existence toward the future; it is a movement beyond oneself, which becomes a way of existing that is integral to one's existence (Heidegger 2006). In contrast, the girl's anticipatory temporality is a temporal stasis, which begins to diminish her claim to a future.

11. Mann's reading of women's vicarious relation to the future argues that the dependency a woman experiences in the realm of transcendence is unstable and thus generates a woman's point of view. This, Mann suggests, creates the possibility for women to protest their subordinated existence (Mann 2008). This means that women can protest their confinement to the present, but nevertheless acknowledges their distinct envelopment in it.

12. On Deutscher's view, Marx significantly inspires Beauvoir's discussion of the temporality of repetition. Deutscher claims "Beauvoir echoes Marx's" notion that the maintenance and reproduction of life are "forms of stasis rather than creation or transformation" (Deutscher 2008, 99–100). Although I find much to agree with in Deutscher's reading, repetitive labor is not, in itself, what makes women habituated to repetition. Rather, as I have shown, being confined to the present actualizes the repetition of the present. This may, as Beauvoir shows, be reified through a woman's labor, but it is not wholly necessary that it be the case. Moreover, in contrast to my reading, McWeeny suggests the rupture is the temporal constitution of a woman's existence (McWeeny 2017).

13. Some of the women in Beauvoir's novels settle into temporalities that seem to complicate this point. For instance, in *The Mandarins*, Paule confines herself to her past through an endless devotion to Henri. This devotion confines her to the time of their relationship, which, in the context of the novel, is the past. However, Paule's refusal to move on with her life and her demand to maintain what once was with Henri is a way to maintain and thus repeat her self as *for* Henri. For this reason, her past can be read as a past made into a passive present (Beauvoir 1956).

14. Heinämaa's reading of Beauvoir's discussion of time in *Adieux* emphasizes this more general point about the material conditioning of time. Heinämaa draws attention to Beauvoir's response to, if not disapproval of, Sartre's claim about the givenness of a futural temporality of human existence: "Beauvoir . . . points out that Sartre's 'general' description applies to merely certain 'privileged people' (426)" (Heinämaa 2014, 185).

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